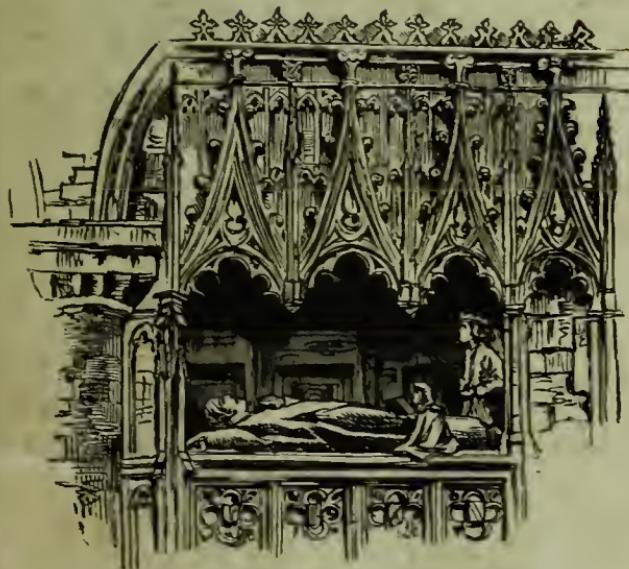


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Prior Rahere's



What a marvel of quiet beauty that tomb is.—Page 12.

Rose

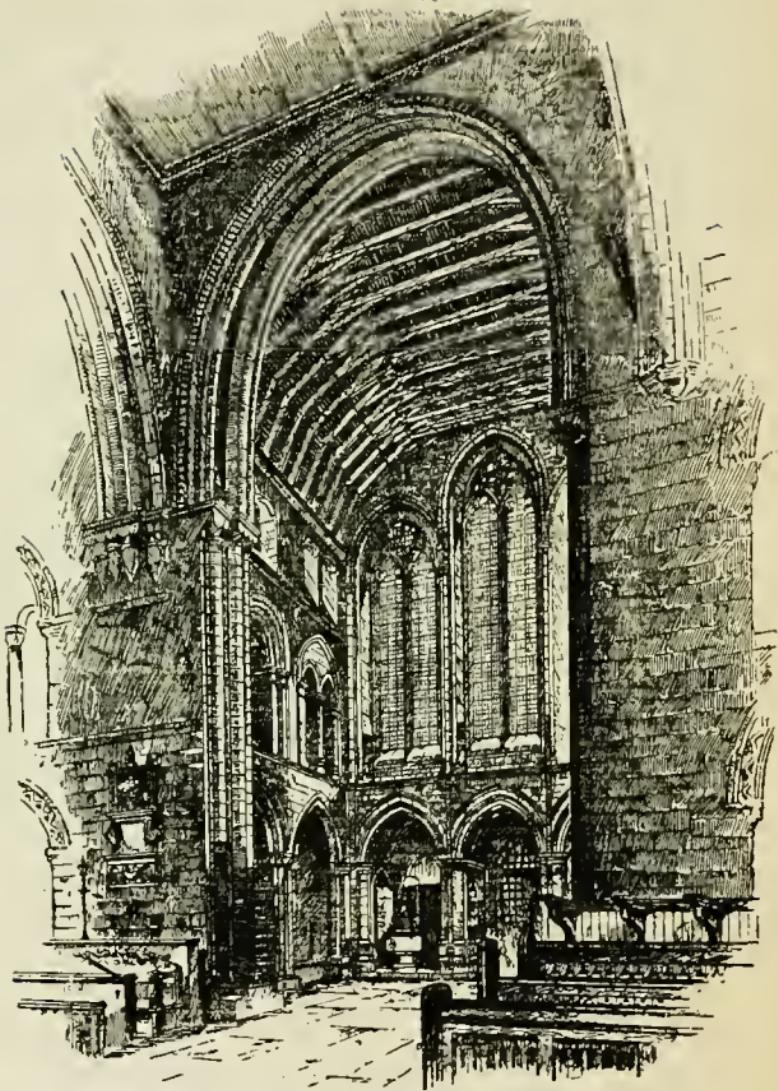


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Prior Rahere's Rose.



“When they shall pray towards this place: hear Thou in Heaven Thy dwelling-place ; and when Thou hearest, forgive.”

Channing, Mary M.
...

Prior Rahere's Rose.

*A STORY OF ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S,
SMITHFIELD.*

'The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them;
and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose.'

ISAIAH xxxv. 1.

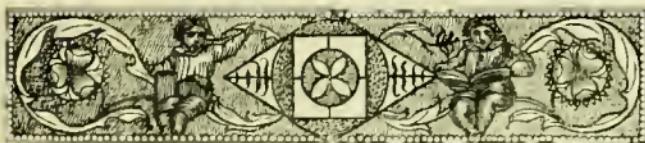
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1895.

ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE CHURCH.

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NOTE.

FOR a great part of the material which goes to make up this simple story I am indebted to Miss Emily Malbone Morgan of Hartford, Conn., U.S.A., who, during a weary time of convalescence from fever at Rome, was ministered to by one of the nurses from St Bartholomew's Hospital, London, who beguiled many an hour by tales of the Patients. Later on they made a pilgrimage together to the "Isola di S. Bartolom-mio," the island in the Tiber where the Monks of the Monastery of St Bartholomew still labour for the sick, and connected by many with Prior Rahere's vision.

Afterwards in London they visited the outcome of that vision,—the Hospital and Priory Church in West Smithfield, and there realised how his work of over seven centuries ago still follows him.

I am having this little story published now for the purpose of helping on, if in ever so small a

way, the restoration and other work carried on at Prior Rahere's Church which is here in our midst ; a church which has endured through many trials and many vicissitudes, and which has had attached to it through all the long centuries which have passed since Prior Rahere laid down the cross and took the crown, those, who—

“Calm and true,
Life's highest purpose understood,
And like their blessed Master, knew
The joy of doing good.”

MARY M. CHANNING.

October 1893.

“ God blesses still the generous thought,
And still the fitting word He speeds,
And Truth, at His requiring taught,
He quickens into deeds.”

“**T**HERE are those now—we all know them—who by the brightness in their eye, and the purity in their face, and the calmness of their brow, and the gentle dignity of their manner—though not only by these—make us feel and know that they breathe the air, and wear the dress, and frequent the Court of the King of kings; who by their words, and deeds, and motives, and principles, and sacrifices, make the discipleship of Christ a real and beautiful confession, and the personality of Christ one of the vital forces of the world.”

THOROLD,



CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

I NEVER was regular Hospital Chaplain at St Bartholomew's the Less, but one autumn I went up to London to see my old friend Bill Savage.

To the public he was known as the Rev. Wm. Savage, but always by me as "Bill," a survival of old University days, when we both were at the "Varsity," and he a most noted and rugged specimen of muscular Christianity.

No one could have thought then that the best oarsman of the College, the devoted cricketer, the ardent lover of football, would be likely in later life to drift into the position of a hospital chaplain, where the strength which had been developed through athletic sports, and had called forth the admiration

and respect of all his fellows, would be largely spent henceforward in the interests of the sick and suffering.

At the time of this my visit to London he had been for some years the companion and comforter of the city poor in their hours of sickness and distress, their comforter in their dying moments, and the friend whom all loved and looked to for guidance and counsel, from the matron of the great hospital to the lowest dependent within its walls.

He had been overworked during the summer, and now I found him in gray, foggy November in a condition sadly belying his former athletic activities.

His broad chest had been examined by one of the visiting physicians of the hospital, a man of note, and he had been ordered peremptorily southward to the Riviera, that beautiful graveyard of so many lost hopes and of so much once strong manhood.

Thus it was in brief that I became temporary chaplain at St Bartholomew's, and he regretfully (for he loved his work) took a year's absence.

I had not long returned from some years' service in Canada, and had hardly yet settled in the old country, for since my return I had been staying down in Norfolk, on the "Broads"; but having grown very weary of two months' idleness, I naturally entered into this London work and the novel experience of a hospital with zest and interest.

I had much of the enthusiasm of the American for the old "city," its innumerable churches, with their monuments and relics of the past, the narrow winding streets in which the good and great whose names are household words among us lived and walked; its literary landmarks, its carefully preserved homes and haunts of the old English worthies, were a source of unending delight to me. I had been dwelling in a country where history had not yet impressed itself upon building and streets, whose traditions and customs were, in a measure, borrowed, and where that which is only a century old is spoken of in whispers of awe.

It will be easily understood how quickly I learned to love the gray old pile of hospital

buildings overlooking historic Smithfield, where John Rogers and so many others perished at the stake in the reign of the bigoted and intolerant Queen Mary.

My time was not wholly occupied with Hospital ministry, so I was able to spend many an hour under the old Norman arches of the beautiful Priory Church of St Bartholomew the Great; sometimes as one of the few worshippers who gather at the quiet daily service and claim within those sacred and venerable walls, as thousands have done before them, the promise of our blessed Lord to the faithful two or three: at others, silently kneeling on the pavement in the Choir, near the tomb of Prior Rahere, the founder of the Hospital and the Church.

What a marvel of quiet beauty that tomb is, with the rich tracery of its carved stone canopy, the effigy of the venerated Prior Rahere himself reclining beneath, clad in his black Augustinian habit as during life, the crowned angel at his feet, and the kneeling monks on either side reading from their open Latin Bibles the passage from Isaiah's prophecy—“The Lord shall comfort

Zion: He will comfort all her waste places, and He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the Garden of the Lord. Joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of melody." And again Isaiah says— "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose."

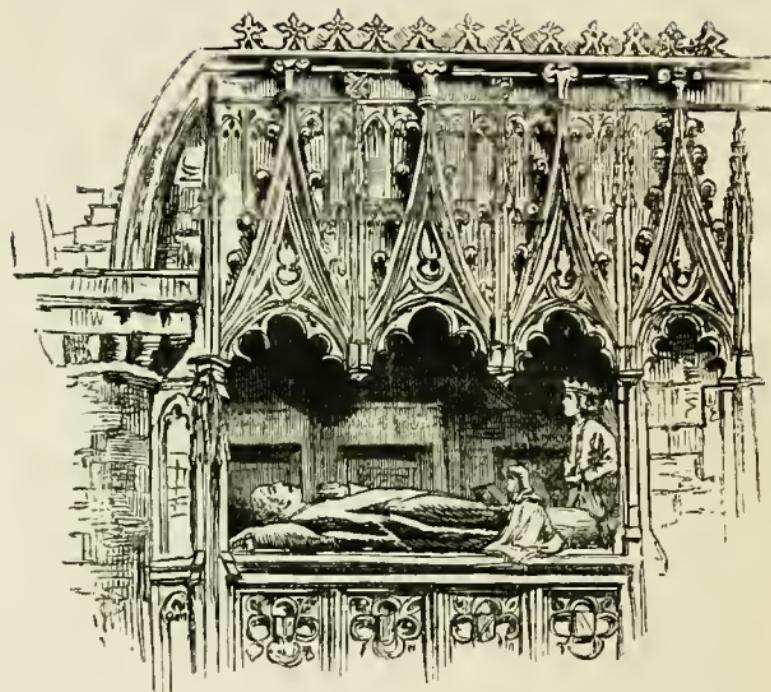
God bless old Prior Rahere! weary hearts have indeed been comforted and led to gladness by his work, cheerless lives have indeed been warmed to deepest gratitude and thankfulness by the tender ministry of love !

Seldom is it that a man's works follow him down so many centuries, or that he is allowed for so long to minister to suffering generations ; seldom also that visions are fulfilled in such blessed realities, seldom that lives teach such long lessons as his—for he, lying beneath the marble in his own beloved Church, being dead, yet speaketh to modern London's suffering ones, and to the labourers in God's vineyard who would gain inspiration from his example, and go out from that quiet holy Church to their

daily work, determined by God's help to do likewise.

“ Where is the victory of the grave ?
What dust upon the spirit lies ?
God keeps the sacred life He gave—
His servant never dies ! ”

For, ah! the Master is so fair,
His smile so sweet to banished men,
That they who meet it unaware
Can never rest on earth again.”



What a marvel of quiet beauty that tomb is.—Page 12.



CHAPTER II.

PRIOR RAHERE'S WORK.

THE story of how the Church and Hospital came to be founded is full of mystery and interest. To begin at the beginning, as the children say, we must go a long way back to the loss of the White Ship off the coast of Normandy, and the loss with it of the young Prince, whose father, tradition tells us, never smiled again. The nation received a sobering shock. The people gave up feasting and rioting, and hastened to save their souls as best they could, and amongst them *it is believed* was one Rahere, described in the old Chronicles as the "King's Jester," who decided that his way of salvation should begin by a pilgrimage to Rome. Alas ! he came near reaching heaven quicker than he dreamed of, for shortly after he arrived in Rome, he proceeded to the place of the martyr-

dom of St Peter and St Paul, where he was brought low by malarial fever.

As he lay on his narrow bed, sick and weary, he thought of his past life spent in the frivolous atmosphere of the royal court, how useless it had been, how unworthy of his manhood, how sinful in the sight of a righteous God. And there and then he vowed that, should his life be spared, he would himself build a hospital and dedicate his future life to God. There is every reason for believing that Rahere visited the relic of St Bartholomew, then recently brought from India, and deposited on the Island of the Tiber, dedicated to *Æsculapius*, the God of Medicine. Over the relic is built the church now standing dedicated to S. Bartolommo.

However that may be, on his journey home the holy Apostle Bartholomew appeared to him in a vision, and told him he would recover and return to London, where he must seek a waste place outside the city wall, at Smithfield, and there he was to found, not only a hospital, as a refuge for the sick and old, and call it "St Bartholomew's," but also a Church.

On his arrival in England Rahere obtained a grant from King Henry I. at Smythfield, now

Smithfield, and in former days a place of execution. There, in 1123, he founded a Church and Monastery of the Augustinian order, and a hospital which he designed for the relief of "all sick folk," until such time as they should be healed of their infirmities.

Of the beauty of the original building we can only form a true idea by seeing what is left to us of the Priory Church, whose massive Norman columns have defied the wear and tear of seven and a half centuries of our damp English climate, and still look as enduring as the everlasting hills themselves.

Rahere was himself the first Prior of St Bartholomew's, and after many years spent in works of piety and charity, passed to his reward, and was buried in his own Church. Thus a monk's vision has blossomed with the charitable work of centuries, and through all this time the wilderness of London has been glad for him, and the desert of sad humanity has again and again received through him the unfolding rose of life.

But I have wandered in my enthusiasm for the good old monk—

"Who dreamed not of a perishable home,
Who thus could build."

Within the walls of the hospital with its ancient memories the tide of human life still ebbs and flows. The days are full of work for some—full of suffering for others; doctors go their daily round among the patients, students crowd around the bedside, anxious to gather all the knowledge they can, while nurses in their clean white caps and neat becoming dress, softly tread the wards, busily ministering to the unceasing wants of those who lie so helpless on their beds, so dependent on their nurse's patient and loving care. Daily in the hushed and awe-stricken ward there is a still release, a passing out into silence; daily some newcomer, bowed down in the mystery of pain, takes the place of the released one. We rejoice with the numbers who pass annually through the great gateway of King Henry VIII., cured, happy, hopeful, attended by rejoicing friends! We mourn also with those whose dear ones are carried out beyond the need of healing, who have reached that country where the inhabitants shall no more say, "I am sick!"

Let us quietly stand within the shadow of the archway for a moment, and think of those who have lived and suffered there for over seven

centuries, those multitudes of the unknown poor who have received help and comfort in their sorest need; and in contrast to these, the gifted doctors, Abernethy, Brodie, Lawrence, and many another who lived and learned and laboured within the hospital walls, and whose names are now world famous for discovery and skill. Does it not give us a sense of immortal life, and help us to realise that time is always victor over death?

Now let us pass onward, and mount the well-worn steps of the great hall staircase, which, adorned with its mural paintings of the Good Samaritan and the Pool of Bethesda by Hogarth, reminds us solemnly of Him who is the great Physician, and who gave the inspiration for this as for every other work of healing and of love; later let us stand in the noble hall of King Henry VIII., whose portrait, in gorgeous array (as we know it so well), faces in the stained glass window that of the gentle and meek St Bartholomew.

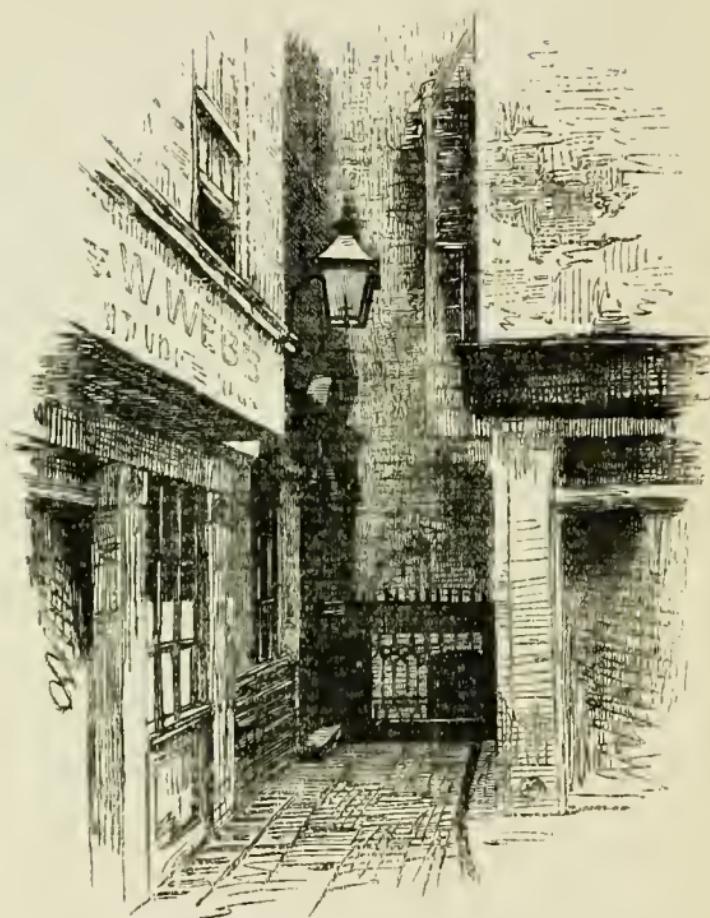
Do we not, while gazing, lose sight of everything but the history of the place? Can we not almost find a soft place in our hearts for the bluff old monarch, who, though he destroyed monas-

teries, re-endowed this hospital towards the end of his reign with a royal charter, keeping thereby the memory of at least one hated monk for ever green?

But I must recall myself. It is with the living, not the dead, I have to do ; with simple, nameless lives, rather than with those of noble birth, who, by famous deeds, have graven their names on the book of Time.

“ Meek souls there are, who little dream
Their daily cross an angel’s theme ;
Or that the rod they take so calm,
Shall prove in Heaven a martyr’s palm.”

“Here lies a rose, a budding rose,
Blasted before its bloom.”



The street was full of shadows.—Page 31.



CHAPTER III.

NANNO.

I CAME across so many curious bits of history, so many humorous episodes, such pathetic glimpses into the shadier side of London life, that for some time after going to my chaplaincy I kept a note-book of my new experiences. Certainly in ministering to the suffering poor we may learn more in weeks, and even in days, than during years of earnest work among the strong and well.

What stories we hear of pain and of poverty patiently and heroically borne; what fortitude and trust in God are met with before a dangerous operation, what gratitude for little kindnesses is often shown!

It is enough to walk round the hospital quadrangle on a fine summer's day, and talk with one and another of the patients, when, to their

great delight, they have been carried out on stretchers, and covered warmly with their many coloured rugs, look almost picturesque under the green trees and bright blue sky, to realise what intense pleasure it is to them to breathe again the sweet fresh air, and feel it softly fanning their cheeks ; to watch the chirping sparrows and to listen to the cool splash of the water in the great stone fountain in the centre. It was a community all by itself to which I had been called upon to minister, a sad congregation indeed ; and again and again I longed for the tongue of a Ugo Bassi to speak to them of courage, of strength, and of that rare patience which endureth to the end.

After a few weeks, however, my note-taking came to an end with the story I am writing, the simple record of a child's life which went out some years ago, the briefest possible history, last and least of the lives of those who have made the hospital famous, and of the unknown ones who have taken shelter there. A life leaving little impress behind it and no one to feel its loss, for it belonged only to one of the small waifs of the great city ; one of those whose early sharpening of feature gives that weary, aged look to the face, forming quite a type in East London—a product

of our nineteenth century civilisation—the faces of children who have no future and no past, only an endless present struggle for the right to live.

Hers was not the life of a young saint, and she would never make a proper heroine of a Sunday School story. Her language was by no means always choice, and she had the flavour of the streets about her—they had been her only home. Yet in another state and under different circumstances she would have been just such a child as mother eyes would follow with rare tenderness, and whom they would delight to clothe in velvet and lace. Her little colourless face was lighted up by blue eyes of singular sweetness, and was crowned with a glory of tangled yellow hair. Up to the day she died the nurses could never quite get the tangle out of her curls, they had missed the caress of loving fingers for so long. I say “died,” and yet she never seemed to really die. It seemed only a sequel to her story which she told me at intervals during several weary weeks of pain, and which I have put as far as possible into a complete narrative. Some would ask, Why preserve anything so simple? It is because I think we need, in our complex age, simple stories of quiet and unobtrusive lives constantly

brought before us. We have the lives of many saints, long since passed into glory, recorded for our encouragement and emulation ; and very often we fling them down (is it not so ?) saying, “These people are too good ! I can never be as good as all that.” This is the reason why I have written out the life of a little London sinner who for a short time was in “Prior Rahere’s Ward,” just to show how much natural goodness God puts into the hearts of the untaught, and how very much untrained sweetness may lie in very ignorant little lives.

I had been at St Bartholomew’s only a few days when I was sent for by one of the “Sisters,” an earnest, sympathetic woman, who told me a little girl had been brought in that evening, whom they thought to be dying. She had tried to climb a ladder, left by the workmen who were repairing the tower of a neighbouring church, and having fallen, had been picked up unconscious. She was talking very confusedly to herself about the ladder and the sky, and the kind Sister thought I might make out something of what she was saying.

I found her lying on her little bed, keeping her head and fingers moving restlessly, her blue eyes wandering from object to object. She did

not speak to me, but went on talking to herself at intervals. She seemed always struggling up an ascent, which was followed by an interval of confusion and bewilderment. Shortly afterwards I left her, and on enquiring for her the next morning, was told by one of the nurses she had spent all the night in the same restless way. "She seems all the while ascending a ladder, sir," said the nurse, "and never getting to the top."

Of course we knew the child's case was hopeless from the beginning, but she lingered on from day to day. I did not see her again until the fourth day after she had been brought in; she was then quite comfortable, rational, and free from pain.

The weather that December had been extraordinarily cold; it wanted now only a few days to Christmas, and gifts must be purchased for various small nephews and nieces in the country. I had been out doing my shopping, and been able to bring in with me two or three Christmas roses, which, when I visited Nanno, I was very glad to give to her. Their pure white blossoms brought delight to her eyes, and at last won her confidence.

"You be the parson, beant you?" she asked, looking lovingly at the flowers.

"Yes," I answered, "and now that I have brought these roses to you, I want you to tell me something about yourself; I will sit by your side while you tell me what your name is, and where you live, and all about yourself."

So here she began her autobiography in a quaint dialect of her own, and I took it down as far as possible from her own lips.

"You want to know who I be?" she asked. "The womans wid the caps ask me that lots o' times since I come here, but I keeps mum. I wouldna tell you if you hadna given me them flowers. Please, I donna know who I be; they used to call me Nanno down the street I lives. First it be Nan, and then be's No, and now it be's Nanno."

"What street, you asks? Donna you know Smoker Alley, down by the river-bank? I lived there ever so long wid a woman they calls **Granny**. Well, **Granny**, she werena bad to me; she used to give me sunthin' to eat every day, and hardly ever beats me more na onced a week. Oncet she knocked me down stairs, but then she

be's a drinkin', and persons donna know what they 's doin' then."

Her nurse came up with her tea at this moment, and seeing that the child was looking weary, I bade her "good-bye," and promised to come in and see her the next day.

I went over to the Priory Church to Even-song. The street was full of shadows; only two or three were present in the dimly lighted choir, but I always counted Prior Rahere, in his prostrate attitude, with his folded marble hands, as one of the worshippers, and the little attendant monks reading so diligently from their stone Bibles as two more. My thoughts were full that evening of the child I had just left; how I longed for a blessing for her! Such an uncared for, such an untaught little one she seemed, so soon, perhaps, to die; did she know anything of the Good Shepherd, who calls the little children His own lambs, and is ready ever to fold them in His loving, outstretched arms?

Our service of prayer and praise was over, and as I knelt after the solemn benediction was pronounced, the promise of the apostle St Bartholomew in his vision to the founder came

to my mind—"This spiritual house Almighty God shall inhabit, and hallow it and glorify it, and His eyes shall be open and His ears intending on this house, night and day, that the asker in it may receive, the seeker in it shall find, and the ringer or the knocker shall enter." Rejoicingly I believed that my prayer for our poor little suffering patient would be heard and answered.

Upon my visit the next day I found Nanno propped up in bed actually waiting for me, her Christmas roses in a small vase beside her. She was evidently in a communicative mood.

"I 'se bin watchin' them flowers all day," she said. "Makes me 'member things. You sees I niver goes much out o' Smoker's Alley; but oncen', ever so long ago, I did go out into th' country. I donna know jest how I got there, but I do know th' sun was shinin' and th' sky kinder dropped down at th' end o' th' meader, as if it were tryin' to kiss th' tree-tops. You knows how th' sky drops down at th' end o' meaders, parson, donna you?"

I gave an assenting nod.

"Then there were some birds way up a tree, wid coloured feeders, an' I tried to talk to 'em, but they flewed off. Lawks, I knows why—

'twas acause I were ragged. Them kinds o' birds be's very 'spectable, you knows, an' I couldna find any black birds. You thinks I donna know 'bout black birds, but I does! There's lots o' boys down our alley as they calls black birds. I dinna care so much, I jest feels kinder sore down here," and she put her hand on her heart. "I 'se got feelins, I has!"

"How did you like the country, Nanno?" I asked.

“I dinna know what to make o' it at all. I'd never seen much sky afore, acause o' smoke; an' the sun dizzle dazzled my eyes, and th' little water-drops seemed to glisten o' everythin'. I wasna used to much grandeur, an' so when the dark come on I gets scared o' it all, it made me feel so lonesome-like. I jest plucks up a blue flower on th' road, an' left th' great big field an' things as seems to be stretchin' 'emselves all over, like one o' Granny's yawns, an' me an' th' flower walks back to town.”

“What did you do with the flower?” I asked.

“I put it in an old can to grow, an' kissed it by way o' charm, two nights arunnin'; but, crickets! it dinna do no good. I picked it Friday, an' it

died o' Monday ; it no more belonged to Smoker's Alley than I do to th' country."

She paused a moment as if in thought, and then went on—" I allers thought, parson, p'r'aps that 's why th' sky in th' country were so blue and pure like ;—acause all th' blue flowers what fades down here kinder gets up there somehow. I thought o' that sky a many times since ! " She was growing weary, she had not strength to sit up long or to talk much.

Her nurse told me that earlier in the day she had been very naughty, and had exhausted herself by punching the pillows wrathfully. She was, as I have said, no model ; her words and conduct grieved her kind nurses at times, but, of course, in writing memoirs, even Nanno's, one is expected to skip over the naughty passages. With me she was always quaint and good. Everyone at the hospital who had anything to do with her had grown fond of the child, and one thing they all agreed upon, that though at times refractory, she was very patient in bearing pain.

During all this time we had found out very little about her ; she wandered into so many

fancies instead of answering the questions we wished to know.

When I saw her the next day I asked her at once what she was doing before she was hurt. Nurse Lindall had come up with me to the bedside, and after seeing that she was comfortable, for she had not been so well that day, and needed constant attention, she also sat down beside her.

“I’se kinder o’ mixed like,” said the child ; “I canna jest think. One real cold day I ’member ; I were wanderin’ up and down th’ streets, a-trying to find suthin’ to eat, acause I hadnna had nothin’ that mornin’, an’ I happen to pass a churchy kind o’ house. It werena none o’ them where people sits up in silks and fixins, and looks fine all locked up in them boxes ; I ’se bin in them ; but here they were singin’ awful sweet, an’ I peeps in through th’ winder, an’ they looks so warm an’ ’appy, and me so cold outside ; so, I goes to th’ door, an’ jest steps inside, an’ then, parson, what do you think they sings ? They told me where I could go, and says there were a Friend for all little children up in the blue sky, ‘a Friend who never changes an’ His love will

never die.' They did say it, parson, acause I hears 'em myself, an' I was so glad t' hear it I jest claps my two hands together, and then a big man come an' tells me I had no business there, and turns me out. I didna care, acause I were jest athinkin' an' thinkin' how I could get up to th' sky, jest to tell that Friend, you know, how very hungry I were, an' if He'd only give me a bit t' eat an' let me warm myself at His house, I'd do anything for Him after my hands gets thawed out."

"Poor little dear!" said Nurse Lindall, gently stroking back her curls.

"O' course, I didna really think He lives in th' sky, as you see it, but I think He lives somewhere 'way up high 'bove th' smoke an' fog. So I thinks 'bout it all day, an' says to Granny at night, 'Granny,' says I, 'how's th' best way to get up in th' sky?' And Granny, she laughed, an' she says quite gruff-like, 'Take a ladder, child.' Now, weren't it sharp o' Granny to think o' that ladder? Well, next day I didna wait; I goes out early, an' never tells Granny where I were going; but I jest makes up my mind to look till I finds a ladder as would go right up

into the sky. So I walks and walks till I gets mixed like, an' it grows colder and colder, an' th' wind it whistles down th' streets, an' I gets so hungry; yet, I know there were a ladder somewhere as would go right up into th' sky. A man were a-talkin' to a real pretty little girl at th' corner o' a street, an' he seems nice and kind-like, so I goes up to him an' I asks him where I could really find a ladder. 'Ladder, child,' says he, as if he were wantin' to laugh; 'What do you want of a ladder for?' 'Please, sir,' says I, real specterful, for he had on a smooth coat, an' his boots they shines like anything—'Please, I wants it to climb on, sir. The peoples I hear singin' yesterday says a Friend were waitin' at t'other end, an' who were real kind to the children, an' I'se in such a hurry to find a ladder acause I'se so cold an' hungry.'

"Then he axes what parish I belongs to. Please, parson, what is a parish anyhow? I looks at him an' he goes away, an' I didna ask anybody more. But pretty soon, near night, I finds a big, tall ladder on th' side o' a big, high tower, an' I couldna see th' end o' it;

so I knows it must be somewhere near to the sky. But first I were so scared, acause it were so late an' grows so dark down below, an' I didna know but by th' time I gets up there th' Friend might agone away or mightna think I were nice acomin' that time o' night. At last I thinks I would begin to climb, an' I begins to make speeches to myself what I would say to Him, that Friend, you know, when I sees Him, an' how I would tell Him I hopes He wouldna send me away, an' that I wouldna come abeggin' so late o' night if I hadna been so cold an' hungry. But as I goes higher I grows so cold an' hungry; the words come back so clear like 'bout th' Friend o' little children--oh, I canna think o' th' rest now!"

So the good Sister finished for her:

"Above the bright blue sky,
A Friend who never changes,
Whose love will never die."

"Is that it, Nanno?"

"Yes, that's it! And do you know, I didna seem to care so much for sumthin' to eat, or make me warm after that; but I thinks more 'bout

some one to love me an' take me up in their arms, acause I were growin' so tired! I stops to rest a little, and I sees the little stars atwinkling up above, and oh, I does want so bad to reach that good Friend ; an' then, you never see such a sight in your life, a blue light, an' all pink lights, an' a great gold light all 'bout me ; an' then they goes away as I goes on, an' up above me I sees all th' street-lamps o' th' sky alighted one after one, an' then I knows I were getting nearer, an' then my heart goes pit-pat, an' my head goes round so queer like ; an' I loses hold o' everythin', an' down I goes, an' that 's why I 'se here. I feels so ugly at firstest when I finds myself here, acause I were almost there, you know, almost at th' top, an' this place seemed kind o' strangelike, not Smoker's Alley or th' country."

"But, strange to say," I answered, "you have come here to find the very Friend you wanted."

"You 've bin kind," she sighed wearily, "but you 's not th' one I were looking for."

"I know I am not," I replied, "but He is here. He has been waiting for you for a long time."

"Awaitin' for *me*?" she asked, incredulously,
"why, who could atold Him 'bout *me*?"

"He knew you were climbing to reach Him,
for He knows everything."

I saw how tired and weak she was growing, so I rose to go away, and looking at my watch, said, "I must leave you now for a little while, but I will come back soon and tell you all about Him."

"And bring Him with you?" she asked, eagerly.

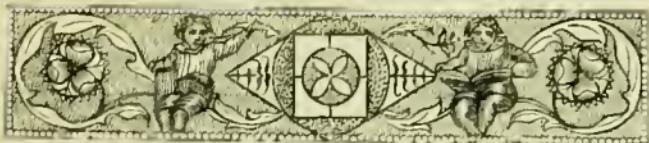
"You shall rest in His arms to-night if you would like to," I answered, "though you may not see Him; but in a few more days, I cannot tell how many, I promise you shall really see Him as He is."

And as I went out the Sister bent over her little patient with a new and tender look on her face, a look born of deeply stirred emotions and of loving sympathy.

“ She 's from a world of woe relieved,
And blooms a Rose in Heaven.”



"This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of Heaven."



CHAPTER IV

FOUND AT LAST.

THAT night I told Nanno, as simply as I could, the story of the Christ-child, and she went to sleep holding a little picture of Him in her hand.

Next day I continued the story, telling her at the close that He was waiting for her to become His own special child, and to sign her with the sign of His cross.

"I knows 'bout that," she said, "Nurse were tellin' me al 'bout it this morning, an' she says I can have a new name too, a real name, not a made up one."

"Yes," I said, "what would you like to be called?"

She drew from under her pillow a faded, crumpled Christmas rose, one of those which had given her such delight, and which had

opened her heart towards me on one of my first visits.

“I wants to be called Rose, after this here flower, please, parson.”

So that day she was christened, Nurse Lindall acting as one of the godmothers, and our little girl was transplanted a Rose into the Lord’s garden.

Talking with her nurse afterwards, I mentioned that I could not get the text inscribed in the old church out of my head in connection with Nanno, and said how I wished the good old Prior might know of this last and sweetest rose that had blossomed at St Bartholomew’s.

The thought was fanciful, but it pleased her, and thenceforward Nanno was known throughout the Hospital as “Prior Rahere’s Rose,” and from that day until the end there were fresh roses always on the table beside her. For a few days she was brighter. I used to visit her every day, and tell her Bible-stories, or have quiet talks with her, and then she began to fail. Her mind wandered distressingly over times in the past when she had been hungry and cold, or she was climbing that lofty ladder, and never reaching the top.

At last, on the morning of Christmas Eve, the day of all others consecrated to the children, a message was brought me that she was dying ; that the doctors said she would hardly linger through the day.

I spent the greater part of it beside her ; her mind was clearer than it had been for a week, so I could talk with her at intervals when she was not overcome with sleep.

Poor little waif ! gradually she had won her way to everybody's heart, and when the news went forth that *Prior Rahere's Rose* was dying, though death was not infrequent there, it came with a new and painful surprise.

Throughout the day the nurses of her ward kept coming up one after another to see if they could do anything for her ; and many an inquiry was made after the little patient from those who worked in other parts of the building ; even the old hospital-porter, keeper of the Little Britain Gate, tiptoed in sheepishly and laid some Christmas roses on her bed.

Towards noon she roused herself, and said to Nurse Lindall, who was watching beside her—

“ Parson says I'll see that good Friend afore

evenin', and I were thinkin' p'r'aps some o' you would like to send Him a word."

That saying of Nanno's spread through the hospital, and all through the afternoon the sick folk sent up messages for her to carry to Him, and she would repeat them over and over, trying to remember them all.

As night drew on she sank into a half-stupor, and we gathered round her bed. Outside, the bells of St Paul's Cathedral were ringing antiphonally with the bells of St Sepulchre's, and those of the Priory Church sounded joyously on the clear frosty air. It had been a beautiful Christmas Eve, with a white pall of snow spread softly all over the earth. We almost thought that Nanno had passed away with the pealing bells, but she opened her eyes suddenly, and half raising herself, looked up with such a look as the young St Stephen might have had when he saw heaven opened and Christ standing at the right hand of God.

We stood there hardly daring to breathe for fear we should break in upon the radiancy of the vision, then she smiled at me and said—

“I sees Him! You were right! I be's at

th' top o' th' ladder now, an' there 's sure enough someone awaitin' for me ! ”

Peal joy bells, peal in your gray old domes and towers ! Peal over the great city the news of the New Birth ! Peal for a soul redeemed and a life released from pain. For “ the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose.”

This was as the twilight of the Saturday evening faded into night : the night when Christ was born.





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